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# Subjective Origins, Objective Reality: Knowledge Legitimation and the TM Movement[1]

DAVID ALLAN REHORICK
*Department of Sociology*
*University of New Brunswick, Canada*

## INTRODUCTION

Much as one is born into a culture and social structure, a potential meditator is "born into" an objective reality which is being generated and sustained by the structure and organization of the Transcendental Meditation (hereafter, TM) movement.[2] Unlike the diffuse origins and development of culture, those of the TM movement are singular and clear. The purpose and direction are given through the promise and teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

At the heart of the teaching is the promise that every individual can relocate the nonchanging, common denominator upon which the ever-changing phenomenal world is based. From this basis in "pure consciousness" and "unbounded awareness" there springs a potential for unlimited individual and species evolution, an evolution which can be facilitated through the TM mechanism (Campbell, 1975, pp. 52–54). Thus the TM technique provides a route to "happiness," "unity," "coherence," "orderliness," and "balance" both for the individual and for society. Manifest through the pragmatics of everyday living, the benefits of TM are alleged to be a reduction of "stress" and a preparation for enlivened, efficient, and productive activity. The final and total dissipation of all physiological and psychological stress yields permanent Self awareness (Campbell, 1975, p. 33). The constancy of such an awareness would free perception from its reliance on the finite, limited frames

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[2]At present, Western thought abounds with a wide array of usages for such concepts as "transcendental" and "meditation." In this paper, these concepts are restricted to the thought and teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. It is relevant to note that "Transcendental Meditation ® and TM ® are registered service marks of World Plan Executive Council—United States, a non-profit, educational organization."

of reference (especially the social frames) within which humans see and come to share a common reality and world (Flisher, 1973, p. 30).

To comprehend fully the meaning of the TM program, one would have to understand ancient Indian scriptures, since the Vedas provide the intellectual basis for the TM belief system. If such understanding were a requirement for practising TM, the restricted cultural and social horizons of Westerners would result in an exclusion of a large segment of the world's population from the benefits to be gained from this program.[3] Faced with the problem of expressing the meaning of Vedic conceptions and beliefs in terms of constructs which are meaningful within a Western context, Maharishi has advocated the importance of the scientific frame of reference:

> Through objective validations of the basis of laboratory measurements of metabolic rate, blood chemistry, brain wave patterns, responsiveness of the senses and other indications, . . . the value of enlightenment will be lifted from the shadowy misinformation of past ages into modern scientific reality. (Maharishi, 1977b)

This link between enlightenment and science can be viewed as an attempt to create a comprehensive symbolic universe which would serve as "the matrix of *all* socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 96). Objectivated Western science would account for and explain—would make meaningful—subjective Eastern enlightenment experience. Ultimately, the promise of Maharishi is that our Age of Science will be superceded by an Age of Enlightenment (Maharishi, 1977a, p. xvii).

The present paper aims to provide an interpretive and phenomenological analysis of the role of science within the TM movement. In particular, the aim is to consider possible outcomes of the use of scientific procedures to legitimate the effects of regular TM practice. The discussion will not provide a comprehensive descriptive, historical, or ethnographic account of the TM movement. However, such information will be introduced when relevant to the analysis.

It is my contention that there is a growing rift between "evidence" as constituted through descriptive reports of what meditators say they experience, and "evidence" as articulated through objective, scientific measures of such things as alterations in brain wave patterns, biochemical rhythms, and neuro-muscular reactions. Descriptions of the subjective experience of individual meditators are often couched in terms of the conceptual language provided by the Science of Creative Intelligence

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[3]The problem of seeing and interpreting the intended meaning of ideas is explored by the hermeneutic tradition which addresses itself to the problem that the meaning of words, terms, and concepts can vary depending upon the frame of reference within which terms are employed. In translating from Vedic to Western terms, the problem is to identify what meaning is or might be lost in shifting from one frame of reference to another. This, however, is not the specific focus of the present paper.

(hereafter, SCI). Although non-meditators are exposed to expressions drawn from SCI, the exact meaning of these expressions is available only to bona fide meditators who have completed the basic SCI course. Objective expressions for the effects of TM practice are available to everyone familiar with the conceptual machinery of the scientific frame of reference.

The focus of my analysis is on accounting for the rift between these "subjective" and "objective" expressions for the TM experience. After explicating the subjective and objective modes of expression, the rift between these modes will be discussed in terms of: (1) the ideological role of science within the TM movement, (2) the domination of proximate over ultimate TM values, and (3) the possible competition between individual-centered goals of TM meditators and collective-centered goals of the TM organization. Finally, possible consequences of this rift between subjective and objective modes will be explored by considering the interaction among committed meditators, average or occasional meditators, and outsiders or non-meditators.

The analysis liberally utilizes concepts and ideas drawn from social reality construction theory, especially as represented by such writers as Alfred Schutz (1970; 1971), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967), and Burkart Holzner (1972). Adoption of a social reality construction perspective is relevant because social movements such as TM not only embody collective action but also seek to create a version of reality acceptable within the broader society.

The question of whether or not scientific evidence has in fact validated all the claimed effects of TM practice is bracketed. In addition, my purpose is not to elucidate the meaning of Vedic values and conceptions by translating them into terms meaningful within a Western, scientific world-view. Rather, my concern is to identify the process and consider the consequences of constructing an objective, scientific picture for a "reality" whose experience is inherently singular and subjective. The TM program provides an nice empirical case for exploring the social processes related to objective reality construction, and some of the possible consequences of such a construction.

## EMERGENCE OF TM PROGRAM'S NEED FOR AN OBJECTIVE EPISTEMIC COMMUNITY

When the distinction between knowledge as objective and subjective is reified, there is an increased risk that subjective knowledge will be evaluated in relation to objective knowledge, the former typically relegated to an inferior status and thus given a secondary role in knowledge production. Such reification may restrict the acceptable modes for communicating the intent of the TM program, which in the Vedic tradition holds that knowledge is

experientially based and thus is mediated first through a subject. What constitutes "evidence" for the effects of TM experience may differ for meditators and "outsiders."[4] Meditators report their subjective experiences often in terms of the specialized conceptual language of SCI, thus an understanding of such reports is contingent upon one's knowledge of SCI.[5] For instance, experiences of "pure consciousness" arising from TM practice are typified by expressions such as:

> Boundless, infinitude, beautiful bliss, total silence. In activity a powerful silent wholeness rests on the surface of everything. A beautiful softness connects and interfuses all I see. (Quoted in Maharishi, 1976, p. 77)

and:

> Meditation was filled with light and bliss; I experienced pure consciousness as an unbounded and synchronized continuum—infinite connectedness—and in this state I *was* all that is. I felt the whole universe was my Self, I was on that royal level of existence where one does nothing and accomplishes everything. (Quoted in Maharishi, 1976, p. 82)

To non-meditators, or meditators unfamiliar with the language of SCI, such reports may convey little of either what was experienced, or of what it might be like to experience "pure consciousness." Thus one must distinguish carefully between problems concerning the acceptability of the "reports" themselves as evidence, and the "evidence" which the reports purport to convey to outsiders.

To elucidate the meaning of SCI concepts and principles, devices such as metaphor and analogy have been used extensively. When Maharishi has found a device to be particularly effective for elaborating or explaining an idea, the analogy is often stylized and incorporated as part of a lecture to be presented by TM teachers (Rose, 1976, p. 60). One of his more celebrated analogies is employed to show how a balanced alternation of meditation and activity results in full realization of "cosmic consciousness":

> we dip a white cloth in a yellow dye and let it remain in the dye to be coloured for a few minutes. Then we take it out and expose it to the sun till the colour begins to fade. We repeat the same process, again putting the cloth into the sunlight till the colour fades. Similarly, we meditate for about half an hour and follow this by coming out to act in practical life for about ten hours. (Maharishi, 1967, p. 313)

The process of "dyeing" is repeated until the state of cosmic consciousness has been gained. In another illustration, Maharishi illustrates how the process of

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[4]By "outsider" we mean anyone who has not been formally inducted into the TM program by a bona fide instructor.

[5]Like the TM movement, the distinctive language of SCI is dynamic and changing. More recently, TM is extensively utilizing the language and concepts of modern quantum physics. Nevertheless, one can speak of SCI as specialized since its application of concepts from any framework serves particular ends.

purification transforms the experience of self as enlightenment dawns. He compares the nervous system to a muddy pond reflecting the sun:

> When the mud is stirred up in the pond, the reflection of the sun may be very poor. On the other hand, when the mud settles and the water becomes pure, the reflection can become so perfect that it shines with nearly all the brilliance of the sun itself. Similarly, the nervous system may be thought of as a reflector of creative intelligence, and deep-rooted stresses may be compared to mud obstructing the nervous system's reflecting capacity. (Bloomfield & Kory, 1977, p. 261)

Although analogies, metaphors, and the language of SCI may report what meditators themselves honestly feel they are experiencing, they do not report what their experiences are about. To some extent, this matter is less problematic with regard to more recent advances in the TM program.

Some of the so-called TM-Sidhi techniques have concrete referents for what is being experienced. For example, descriptions of experiences of levitation actualized through more recent advances in TM techniques (the so-called flying-Sidhi) are typified thus:

> I was sitting on a couch meditating at the time. I felt a tremendous amount of energy go through me and simultaneously I had a vision of my spine and my chest being just white light and a form in the air some place and then my body moved up and down on the couch about three times... the next experience I had was of hearing my body touch the floor. (Quoted in Maharishi, 1977b)

And further:

> I don't experience the moment of take-off. I experience being in the air and I experience coming down. At the end of it it's as if my body is a clear tube and it's as if I've blown a lot of things out so that I'm way more clear inside—as if I'm a column filled with light and with a special kind of very clear air and also a feeling of bubbling joy. (Quoted in Maharishi, 1977b)

While the last two illustrations are clear about what these terms are reporting on—"flying"—the reports still contain conceptions which make such evidence questionable from the standpoint of an outsider. Even among some TM researchers one can detect attitudes of apology and skepticism in referring to subjective evidence (for example, see Campbell, 1975, p. 109).

Knowledge gained from descriptions of subjective states becomes "objective" only when the experience of a plurality of meditators, or a meditator's plural experiences, reveal commonalities which permit them to draw conclusions favoring the existence of an objective reality. Knowledge based on the non-variability of the subjective means of observation is more characteristic of Eastern thought (Creative Intelligence quoted in Rose, 1976, p. 51). The "Western approach," based on the non-variability of the objective means of observation, has increasingly been applied to TM in an effort to authenticate reports of "transcendence." This application has been purposive and deliberate. To understand why Maharishi has emphasized the

importance of the "Western approach" of objectifying the effects of TM practice, it is relevant to differentiate *phases* in the development of the TM movement.

Woodrum (1977, pp. 39–42) distinghishes three phases in the TM movement: Phase 1 (1959–65), the Spiritual-Mystical period; Phase 2 (1966–69), the Voguish, Self-sufficiency period; and Phase 3 (1970–77), the Secularized, Popular-Religions period. Rose (1976, p. 82) also differentiates three periods. Of course, it is important to recognize that these distinctions serve particular analytical needs. From the perspective of the TM organization, it might be more accurate to consider two phases to the movement: (1) the period from 1956 to 1974 which embraces the appearance of the first Spiritual Development Centers in southern India to the scientific validation of TM benefits, and the spread of the movement thoroughout the world; and (2) the period since 1975 when Maharishi inaugurated the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment with an accompanying World Government, Constitution, and Plan.[6] The age of ignorance where life is a struggle is being superceded by the Age of Enlightenment where life is happiness, harmony, and love (Maharishi, 1976, p. 113). The period after 1970 (hereafter, TM–Phase 3) is of particular relevance to the analysis in this paper.

TM–Phase 3 displays several important characteristics (Rose, 1976, pp. 101–2). It is a period where: (1) Maharishi initiates a complete reorganization of the various organizations in terms of *The World Plan,* (2) splinter groups begin appearing within the movement ("average meditators" versus "inner movement" in Woodrum's terms; "in-" versus "out-group" in Rose's terms), and (3) a steadily increasing stream of scientific evidence is generated to validate the merits of the TM technique.

With respect to the production of scientific evidence, the concern with "legitimation" during TM–Phase 3 reflects the attempt to create what Holzner (1972, pp. 69–71) has called an "objective epistemic community."[7] An epistemic community is built upon principles of both observer equivalence and non-equivalence. Maharishi's alleged superior powers and knowledge of Vedas give him access to privileged information, thus reflecting legitimate knowledge based on the principle of observer non-equivalence. The quest to legitimate TM–Phase 3 in scientific and objective terms represents knowledge generation based on the principle of observer-

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[6]In 1972, Maharishi launched The World Plan to solve the age-old problems of mankind in this generation. 1975 was the Year of Fulfillment for The World Plan (The Dawn of the Age of Enlightenment). 1978 was The Year of Invincibility to Every Nation. Currently, it may be more accurate to speak of programs of The World Government rather than The World Plan.

[7]Following Holzner (1972, p. 68), an "epistemic community" is taken to mean organized social arrangements whereby a common epistemology is maintained in terms of a shared frame of reference.

equivalence. The latter is important for the institutionalization of the TM movement since legitimation of an institution requires representation of that institution in terms which are meaningful to an objective observer.[8] By co-opting the scientific approach as a means of legitimation, the TM movement respects the need to represent itself in objective terms and to produce the knowledge base required to support an institution. This is consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1967, pp. 93–94) claim that knowledge precedes values in the legitimation of institutions. While institutionalization reflects the normative component of legitimation, there is a cognitive component as well. As a means of legitimation, science serves also as an ideological device which helps establish a place for the TM movement within the mainstream of Western thought. It is relevant, then, to consider in some depth the form and direction of the demystification of TM–Phase 3 by examining some aspects of the process of "objectification."

## DEMYSTIFICATION OF TM PRACTICE: OBJECTIFICATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE TECHNIQUE

It is not surprising that in attempting to justify and legitimate itself the TM movement has latched on to science with its socially sanctioned, intersubjectively shared frame of reference. Speaking of the activity of science, Flisher (1973, p. 31) has remarked that objectivity "is not just a conception: it is a basic attitude that dominates our waking assumptions." Such an enthusiasm permeates the TM literature. For example, the popular and well-known *The TM Book* is a manual designed to tell you what the Transcendental Meditation program is, and why you might enjoy the TM technique (Denniston & McWilliams, 1975). Yet *The TM Book* can also read as an attempt to provide scientific, objective legitimation for a movement which is likely to be regarded with some suspicion and skepticism by an outsider. The emphasis on providing scientific support through psychological and physiological testing for TM effects testifies to the concern with seeking acceptance for TM as a body of knowledge and set of practical techniques (for examples see: Frew, 1974; Kanas & Horowitz, 1977; Morse et al, 1977; and the extensive references in Denniston & McWilliams, 1975). Clearly, research into TM effects is both intensive and extensive.

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[8]Another facet is the institutionalization of authority structure of the TM movement. Here one might speak of the "institutionalization of charisma" rather than of Weber's "routinization of charisma" (Rose, 1976, p. 109). Anticipating the typical fate of social movements when a charismatic authority figure dies (see, for instance, Hill, 1973, Chapter 5), Maharishi is systematically building a video-tape and cassette recording collection of his thoughts. Thus the question of a successor to Maharishi is fascinating in light of the "forever present reality" of Maharishi and his charisma.

The multitude of graphs and charts summarizing the results of separate scientific studies is impressive to both layman and expert. These charts depict anything from change in metabolic rate, recall test performance scores, change in one's relationship with supervisors, spontaneous skin resistance responses, Torrance tests of creative thinking, to assessing the effects of alcohol and drug consumption levels before and after beginning TM practice. More recently, emphasis has been placed on monitoring electroencephalograph (EEG) patterns during the TM and TM-Sidhi program, with particular interest in the function and relations among Alpha, Theta, Delta, and Beta brain waves. Referring to biofeedback research, one writer contends that so much attention has been given to EEG studies of Alpha brain waves that they have become associated with the idea of an "intrinsic good" (Cassel, 1976, p. 8). Although there is much interest in studying brain wave patterns, TM research in this area is relatively new; thus results are inconclusive.[9]

Lately, TM research has turned to the study of sociological factors in an effort to show TM effects on such variables as mental health, poverty, crime, and drug abuse. Several claims as to the supposed "positive benefits" on social behavior have sweeping implications. The so-called "Maharishi Effect" and its alleged importance for a reduction in crime is illustrative.

Generated from the Third Law of Thermodynamics and the conception of entrophy, the "Maharishi Effect" is the "principle of a phase transition to a more orderly state by introducing orderliness into only a small faction of a system" (Orme-Johnson, 1975, p. 6). Such phase transition from disorder to order is claimed to be evident when 1 percent (earlier research claimed 5 percent) of a population is meditating.[10] One social manifestation of the 1 pecent plateau is a reduction of the crime rate. It is claimed that a comprehensive survey of U.S. cities has demonstrated this effect. As Denniston and McWilliams (1975, p. 216) put it:

> in matched *non* meditating cities the crime rate increased 7.7% in one year, but in cities reaching the 1% transition point the crime rate fell an average of 8.8%—a net improvement of nearly 17%.

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[9]While physiological and psychological measurements constitute scientific evidence for alleged TM effects, reports about what has been discovered about the brain in other circumstances have been compared to the results of scientific studies on the TM program. In this case, one can think of clinical evidence derived from case histories. Bloomfield and Kory's (1977) work on the relations among the TM program, psychiatry, and the primal search for happiness is illustrative.

[10]More recent developments in the TM-Sidhi program suggest that this percentage can be reduced further (Maharishi, 1977b). The formula to stabilize and perpetuate the Age of Enlightenment for the whole world's population is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Population of the world | 4,000,000,000 |
| Minimum number of Meditators practising TM | 40,000,000 |
| Minimum number of Sidhas practising the TM-Sidhi program | 400,000 |

Thus the "Maharishi Effect" is assigned the status of a "social law." Criminals are considered violators of both natural and social laws. To break the cycle of deviant and criminal acts, a restoration of balance and orderliness within the nervous system of violators is required. Since the TM technique acts to reduce stress and increase orderliness, then it functions as a "simple technology to immunize an entire population against stress, and therefore against crime" (Orme-Johnson, 1975, p. 5).

If one might justifiably describe as "excessive" TM's concern with objective legitimation in physiological and psychological terms, then "over-objectification" might be appropriate to describe the attempt to consider sociological factors. I would contend that, here, TM research has "unbounded" the usefulness of the scientific frame of reference by uncritically accepting the relevance of scientific procedures for investigating social phenomena. The question of the limits of scientific procedures for understanding the social realm is an old, unresolved controversy. While sociologists are aware of the dangers associated with an uncritical acceptance of "hard," positivistic techniques to study social phenomena, it would appear that TM researchers have paid little attention to this debate. Caution is warranted in accepting *prima facie* the alleged cause-effect between the "Maharishi Effect" and a reduction in the crime rate. To grant the "Maharishi Effect" the status of a "social law" would be to display "pure unawareness" as to the complex of intervening factors which could influence changes in the crime rate. Rather than developing this line of criticism in depth, the more important question is to consider the consequences of a continuing emphasis on science as a way to authenticate the TM program. Whatever the deficiencies in the scientific studies of TM effects, it is clear that the authority of the scientific establishment has served to legitimate and popularize the TM program.

Earlier in the paper, we argued that the TM movement seeks to generate a symbolic universe within which Vedic enlightenment merges with Western science. Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 105) contend that specific procedures for universe-maintenance become necessary when a symbolic universe is not self-maintaining and self-legitimating. Insofar as the conceptual system of Eastern thought required translation into meaningful Western terms, the methodology of science became the "specific procedure" for universe-maintenance. I ask here: is the extensive application of science as a procedure for universe-maintenance beginning to act as a "delegitimating mechanism" of the very symbolic universe it was originally intended to construct? Within a Western context, I would contend that delegitimation is manifest by a growing gap between "subjective" and "objective" expressions for the TM experience. This gap can be explicated by considering: (1) the ideological role of science within the TM movement, and (2) the domination of proximate over ultimate TM values.

## SUBJECTIVE ORIGINS, CONSTRUCTED OBJECTIVE REALITY: A WIDENING GAP

The rift between subjective and objective expressions for TM effects is manifest through the domination of "proximate" over "ultimate" values. Burkart Holzner explicates this distinction well:

> Ultimate values are the most encompassing legitimating principles themselves. They are experienced directly as sources of obligation and meaning, themselves not capable of further justification except possibly through their link to a transcendent mystery. This is the level of values which the charismatic leader of Weber's classic typology represents directly. Proximate values, on the other hand, are the much more specific and "practical" legitimations of everyday conduct. Often they are believed to be quite remote from the ultimate values connected to them through sometimes only tenuous links. (1972, p. 156)

With respect to the TM program, ultimate values are contained in Vedic scriptures, and are contingent upon Maharishi's interpretation as the final source of authority. Ultimate values are expressed by conceptions such as "unbounded awareness," "pure consciousness," and the "absolute basis for right action." To be expressed as proximate values, such conceptions must be translated through the routes of SCI, and the objectification of TM principles via science. Nevertheless, Maharishi affirms the primacy of ultimate over proximate values:

> Reasoned demonstration of the truth of SCI could easily run into volumes . . . However, prior to all reason, verification and validation is direct experience which is the undeniable touchstone of human acceptability. (Maharishi, 1973–74, p. 13)

"Direct experience" in Maharishi's terms refers to an individual's subjective experience of TM and TM-Sidhi effects.

In attempting to express ultimate values in proximate terms, TM research risks either losing some of the meaning of Vedic values, or stretching the meaning of science beyond its framework of relevance. Yet the need to express ultimate values in proximate terms is apparent. In 1974, Maharishi requested that research be conducted with the explicit aim of showing the relations between the Rig Veda and current research in psychophysiology and the growth of consciousness (Rose, 1976, p. 76). Since knowledge associated with the Vedas needs no justification or legitimation in itself (Maharishi, 1976, pp. 94–95), then the gap between ultimate and proximate values resulted when science was introduced as an ideological tool to generate wide appeal for the TM movement within a Western context. Rose (1976, p. 120) maintains that most meditators tend to focus on the two ideological aspects of the movement (science and spirtuality) in explaining why they began and continue to meditate. However, it seems more productive, analytically, to consider science as an "ideological tool" which functions to legitimate and provide a normative expression for ultimate values contained in the Vedas. Following Holzner (1972, p. 144), "ideology" is taken to mean those reality

constructs which serve to legitimate the claims for power and prestige and the activities of groups and their members. King (1956, quoted in Rose, 1976, p. 34) maintains that a movement's ideology defines through norms and justifies through values the kind of action and machinery necessary for the attainment of goals. The obverse would seem to hold for the TM ideology. It defines through values (the Vedas) and justifies through norms (science) the action and machinery necessary for the attainment of goals. Thus, the TM movement is ideological insofar as subjective components (values) of the original frame of reference (the Vedas) are "smuggled" into objective, scientific statements (normative components). Insofar as ideologies (science) rest on prior structures or authorities (Vedas) and new loyalities (Maharishi), then ideologies serve as legitimating symbolizations.

If contact with "pure awareness" signals a resolution to the subject-object split (Campbell, 1975, pp. 100–101), if the individual "in unity" has resolved the absolute-relative paradox (Rose, 1976, p. 47), then it would appear that the goals of the *TM technique at the individual level* are operating in opposition to the goals of the *TM social movement*. As technique, TM aims to "liberate" the individual from conceptual snares such as the subject-object split. As a movement, TM seems to "enslave" the individual by constructing and transmitting legitimating symbolizations (conceptual systems) which split the objective from subjective.

This opposition may be accountable in terms of the tendency for "objectivity" in science to lose its identity as a tool, and to become *the* fundamental condition for the existence of science (Flisher, 1973, pp. 32–33). In a similar way, science tends to lose its relativity as a body of knowledge, and thus becomes *the* fundamental condition for the legitimation of all knowledge. Under such circumstances, the proximate values of science are cleaved from ultimate values and beliefs. Surprisingly, such cleavage may be "more real" within the TM movement than one might expect:

> The vision of this new age [Age of Enlightenment] is very beautiful, very uplifting, and very concrete; it is not a dream. We have confidence in it because it is grounded in scientific data.... We do not ask the people to accept what we say on faith. *Belief has no role* in bringing on the Age of Enlightenment. Our inspiration is not emotional; our vision is not mystical. (Maharishi, 1977a, p. xvii, emphasis added.)

Is science, then, to be viewed as merely an ideological tool of the TM movement, or has science become the fundamental condition of its legitimation? Are the means obscuring not the ends but the TM program's roots and origins?

To answer such questions, the TM movement has to clarify its position on a fundamental, age-old problem—the question of the relation between individual and collective goals. On the individual level, regular practice of the TM technique serves to reduce stress and enhance personal evolution. Yet access to advanced techniques which facilitate more rapid evolution become

available only if the individual is willing and able to increase time, energy, and financial commitments to the TM collective. Thus average meditators, while continuing to practice the techniques, may find themselves isolated from the goals of the movement and its inner core.[11] Average meditators who express commitment to the ultimate values of TM practice may become separated from subjective supporting evidence available through the inner core who have access to the distinctive language of SCI, and the "phenomenal" experience of the TM-Sidhi program. As for outsiders, they might well end up holding an empty ideological shell, or at best one filled to capacity with objective, scientific results. In sum, the use of science as an ideological means for justifying TM practice may have profound implications for commitment to both individual and collective-centered goals of the TM movement. Commitment can be studied by examining mechanisms for membership recruitment and maintenance.

In adapting to modern Western society, the TM movement has progressively downplayed the "spiritual" aspects of its beliefs in favour of the public legitimation of its practice by scientific means.[12] If "success" is evaluated in terms of size, then such public legitimation has served well to ensure the continued growth of the TM organization. Beginning with a handful of individuals in 1959, its 1979 population base had swelled to nearly two million. Such expansion has required periodic alterations to the organizational structure of the movement, particularly with the aim of ensuring commitment. Ironically, after learning the technique of meditation, most meditators do not maintain contact with the movement. In Rose's inquiry, only 23 percent participated in local TM center activities (1976, pp. 61–62). Moreover, 85.8 percent of those sampled claimed that they did not realize that they were joining a social movement at the time that they started meditating. If initial commitment is primarily individual-centered, how does commitment become movement-oriented?

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[11]Woodrum (1977, pp. 42–44) differentiates between two ideal types as sub-populations of the TM movement: "average meditators" who have acquired the technique but participate seldom if at all in the movement's activities, and the "inner movement" comprised of leaders and initiators who see the technique as a path to "cosmic consciousness" and realization of The World Plan. Rose (1976, p. 102) makes a parallel distinction; however, she uses the more conventional sociological jargon of "in-" versus "out-group." I have added the category of "outsider" or non-meditator to cover possible recruits who have not learned the TM technique but who are subject to TM's ideology.

[12]While this statement is valid for the movement as a whole, there are internal differences among leaders. Noteworthy is Charley Lutes, a central figure who has always maintained that the "spiritual" facets of TM should take precedence over the scientific. To my knowledge, Rose (1976) has provided the only systematic attempt to examine the roles of key personnel, their interaction, and place within the TM movement. However, this material lies beyond the scope of the present analysis.

Commitment is contingent upon TM's regulation and control of information. Depending upon the kind of knowledge that one has about TM, individuals can be classified as members of an "inner core," as "average meditators," or as "outsiders." Outsiders have ready access to published materials by and about the TM program. This material tends to downplay the "spiritual" aspects of TM and accentuates the scientific studies on TM effects and benefits. Only after one has become an average meditator (learned the technique) and begun to participate in movement activities does one become aware that TM offers a *Weltanschauung* or world-view (Rose, 1976, p. 63). Access to this world-view requires increased commitment and sacrifice since one must acquire the relevant conceptual language by taking a course in the Science of Creative Intelligence.[13] This knowledge is transmitted from the inner core to average meditators in a predetermined sequence and carefully controlled manner. Such "stylization" serves to structure and restrict what information is to be regarded as credible and acceptable (Holzner, 1972, pp. 117–18). In addition, information aimed to engender commitment is often transmitted in secret. Secrecy is first evident in the transmission and reception of a "mantra." Serving as a vehicle to "pure awareness," the mantra is considered crucial since an "incorrect" mantra, or incorrect usage of a "correct" one, could be detrimental to the meditator. Thus one's mantra is selected by the initiator and transmitted in secrecy to the "initiatee" in a personalized one-to-one ceremony.[14] The requirements of secrecy and individual-centered transmission could be seen as mechanisms for the establishment and maintenance of commitment. Yet, these requirements could also be interpreted as reflecting the movement's awareness that no communication network is likely to be completely reliable. Thus, minimization of meaning distortion and misunderstanding requires careful control of the information flow.

Whether information control serves TM's recruitment and commitment goals, serves to assure "purity" in the transmission of meaning, or both, it is undeniable that a more comprehensive understanding of the ultimate TM values (as expressed through the legitimating symbolization of SCI) remains privileged information of the inner core. Those aspiring to acquire such knowledge must become committed increasingly to the goals and activities of the TM movement. Thus, the "private language" of SCI provides access to the ultimate, subjectively rooted TM values. The "public language" of objective science serves important image management and recruitment functions.

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[13]Rose (1976, pp. 53–54) remarks that even selection of the title "Science of Creative Intelligence" displays cognizance of an effective way to render TM courses a marketable commodity in an academic setting.

[14]In this regard, it would be interesting to monitor the effects of the appearance on the book market of Lalita's *Choosing Your Own Mantra.*

Commitment, as the nexus between individual and movement-centered goals, depends upon a delicate appraisal of what knowledge should be transmitted or reserved. Rose (1976, pp. 136, 142) concluded that TM's commitment mechanisms have been operating imperfectly, and that a gap is appearing between initiators (inner core) and the rank-and-file (average meditators). I would argue that this gap is between the inner core and average meditators *plus* outsiders. Moreover, as discussed earlier in this paper, this gap is also manifest as a rift between subjective and objective expressions for TM effects. What remains to be addressed is the question of possible consequences of a failure of commitment mechanisms to operate effectively.

## SOME CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS OF LEGITIMATING TM PRACTICE THROUGH OBJECTIVE REALITY CONSTRUCTION

In this paper, we have examined the growing rift between the subjective origins and objective reality constructed to legitimate TM as a body of knowledge and set of practical techniques. This rift is exemplified by the accentuation of scientific over "spiritual" facets of TM as public knowledge. I have contended that continued emphasis on objectification and legitimation could have unanticipated repercussions for the goals of the TM movement. The results of the interpretive analysis in this paper suggest the possibility of a split between the inner core (initiators) and average meditators plus outsiders. It is relevant, then, to consider some possible consequences of a continued separation between these groups.

As the literature and volume of objective, scientific reports on the alleged TM effects grow, the likelihood increases that competing claims will emerge among "scientific experts." Since science serves as a mediating link between the specialized knowledge of TM practice and the common stock of everyday knowledge, communication between insiders and outsiders requires "trust" in the scientific tests of TM effects. Trust in knowledge, scientific or otherwise, means the "readiness of a person to credit some source of knowledge to such an extent that what can be learned from it is accepted as truth even in the face of risks and hazards" (Holzner, 1972, p. 187). Trust serves to reduce social complexity.

Unresolved competing scientific claims could generate conflict between authorized knowledge of the effects of TM practice and immediate experience. For the outsider and the non-specialist, this could signal a disenchantment with and distrust of growing scientific reports. Coupled with the restrictive and controlled access to the conceptual machinery of SCI, outsiders could become increasingly alienated form the TM movement. The loss of science as an effective communication link could also reduce the

commitment of the inner core to serve as "reality carriers of TM." Caught between the need to maintain certain secrecy and declining effectiveness of science to act as a vehicle for an insider-outsider dialogue, the initiators could turn inward. Such a suggestion is plausible in light of recent developments of the TM technique. The advent of the TM-Sidhi program could serve to stimulate more internal activity within the movement.[15] It seems very reasonable to suppose that highly advanced meditators will become more attracted to new explorations of one's "TM self" in light of the alleged personal advancements to be acquired from mastery of Sidhi techniques. Considerable time, energy, and financial commitments are required of aspirants at such levels of TM sophistication. If, then, such a scenario has plausibility, the insider-outsider split could pose a serious threat to the TM movement. How might the gap be closed?

Prior understanding of how this gap could have appeared can be instructive. A clue is the recognition that only a very small part of one's knowledge of the world originates within personal experience. Most of our knowledge is socially derived and socially distributed (Schutz, 1971, pp. 13–14). Each individual is simultaneously an expert, well-informed citizen, and a "man on the street" with respect to different "provinces of knowledge" (Schutz, 1970, p. 240). Although each individual's composite stock of knowledge is unique, a common stock of knowledge arises in conjunction with what Schutz has termed "the paramount reality of the everyday life-world."

Within everyday life, there exists a world which is sensually revealed to and shared by you and me. Whatever the inconsistencies of experience, within the "natural attitude" one expects to find an underlying uniformity and a persistent texture to the world. The natural attitude represents an uncritical, prereflective acceptance of a world as is. While the paramount reality is the archetype of our experience of a world, based on this paramount reality are a multitude of nonparamount realities. Through symbols we can transcend the everyday life-world. Thus symbols permit the possibility of varying "finite provinces of meaning" to co-exist. One can think of the co-existence of the worlds of dreams, of religious experience, of fantasy, and of science. The "finite" character of each of these provinces of meaning rests upon the character of the unity of its own peculiar lived experience (Schutz &

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[15]According to Maharishi, enlightenment implies stabilization of our ability to function from "the field of all possibilities," a level of least excitation of consciousness. It is at this level that the so-called Sidhi techniques are practised. Included are such things as knowledge of the past and future, knowledge of other minds, the ability to become invisible, and even the ability to levitate and fly (Maharishi, 1977b).

Luckmann, 1974, pp. 23–24). It is through a shift in one's "accent of reality" that different finite provinces of meaning emerge.[16]

With reference to the TM movement, science can be interpreted as functioning as a "formula for transformation" between two finite provinces of meaning—the paramount reality of the everyday Western life-world, and the province of Eastern enlightenment constructs.[17] If science, taken as a finite province of meaning, requires one to suspend one's subjective hold on experience, acceptance of the reality of "controlled" levitation requires one to suspend disbelief that such a phenomenon (the flying Sidhi) could be manifest only within the non-paramount reality of fantasy. The flying Sidhi allegedly operates on the level of "pure consciousness" which could be described as an "infinite province *for* meaning." Since all knowledge involves constructs, this infinite province must be translated into a finite province of meaning—the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI). In turn, science *per se* is used as a transformation device to bridge SCI with a province of meaning relevant to "everyone." In this respect, science provides a social recipe for making sense out of the lived experience of TM. And objectification serves as the principal reality carrier for science. Objectivity ensures consistency and compatibility of experiences within the borders of the scientific province of meaning.

## CLOSING REMARKS

The tendency of the knowledge-based society toward objectifications of actions, groups, persons, and of itself is inescapable and a component of its reflexivity (Holzner, 1972, p. 191). Objectification is a process essential to human and social life since it releases us from being embedded in our own solitary, solipsistic realities. But objectification too has its costs. As Flisher (1973,p. 36) has phrased it:

> The universe has arisen through objectification and the ball is placed in our hands. We have to practise letting it go if we are to play games with it instead of being its dependent.

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[16]Schutz (1971, pp. 343–44) contended that the transition from one finite province of meaning to another is subjectively experienced as a "shock," thus requiring a "leap." However, Schutz's discussion of the relations among the finite provinces of meaning and the paramount reality "concentrates on the distinctiveness of cognitive styles of the finite provinces of meaning rather than on the similarities and overlaps" (Psathas, 1975, p. 509). Conceptions such as "shock" and "leap" may be appropriate to describe transitions from the finite province of dreams to that of waking. Nevertheless, such notions do exaggerate the character of shifts between, say, the finite province of scientific meaning and the everyday world. Thus Schutz's conceptions of "shock" and "leap" have limited analytical usefulness.

[17]According to Schutz (1971, p. 5), all our knowledge of the world involves constructs. Thus, as a body of knowledge, the meaning of TM experience must be expressed through constructs, scientific or otherwise.

Having constructed its own "ball of objectification," the TM organization seems to be squeezing it tighter rather than letting it go. As means, objectively constructed knowledge may serve TM's ideological ends; but as end, the fabricated ball may rebound in unexpected ways. The product of objective, scientific legitimation could serve as a catalyzing force which could separate individual-specific from collective-centered goals. The individual, as practitioner of the TM technique, is oriented toward the subjective effects of meditation. The TM collective, as a social movement, is oriented toward the objective ends of organizational expansion and the achievement of world order. As technique, TM aims to "liberate" the individual, thus permitting evolution towards "happiness" and "perfectability." As movement, TM could be on the verge of falling prey to the fallacy of reifying the objective legitimations that it has constructed. Thus the movement could create social conditions antagonistic to the individual-centered nature and ends of the technique.

The TM program provides only one of many empirical examples where the effects of the social organization of knowledge upon individual and group behavior can be explored. True to the maxim that phenomenology aims to end where the empirical and human sciences begin, my analysis complements the results from empirical studies of social movements, particularly Donna Rose's major empirical investigation of the TM movement. While Rose ends by posing for future consideration the need to study the effectiveness of commitment mechanisms, my paper considers possible consequences of ineffective commitment mechanisms through an interpretive and phenomenologically inspired approach. While Rose concludes that her study has demonstrated the complex interplay of ideas, of world-view, and of social structure, my analysis focuses on the consequences of just such an interplay. Thus my inquiry displays the utility of combining the results of empirical inquiry with phenomenological and reality construction approaches to the study of social movements.

As a social movement, the goal of *The World Plan* is to "transcend" or supercede the Age of Science and move into an Age of Enlightenment. In his inaugural ceremony of the Age of Enlightenment on January 12, 1975, Maharishi (in referring to the published research on the benefits of the TM program) is said to have asserted that "through the window of science can already be seen the dawn of a new age in which happiness, order, and peace will replace current suffering, confusion, and chaos" (Bloomfield & Kory, 1977, p. xxviii). Yet science itself can create "confusion," "suffering," and "chaos," thus obliterating the vision of world it is supposed to reveal. If Maharishi can say that the diabetic should not think that the TM program is a substitute for insulin, nor should the epileptic think that the TM program will replace the need for Dilantin, then I can say that one should not presume that

objectification is a satisfactory way of fully legitimating an experience which is inherently singular and subjective.

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